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ABSTRACT

This paper explores an innovative approach to funding school improvement programs. It looks at a series of programs initiated by the National College of Education in collaboration with several corporations and foundations in the Chicago metropolitan area. The evolution of the College's participation in these endeavors is reported as well as the strategies used to solicit corporate, institutional, and public school support. Collaborative endeavors are discussed from two perspectives. First, the institution of higher education is examined and it is noted that the involvement of key academic administrators, faculty, and development office personnel is crucial to the success of these projects. The second perspective examined is that of the corporation providing technical assistance and financial support. Important considerations that face corporations before becoming involved in collaborative projects with institutions of higher education are discussed. Case studies are presented of four different school improvement programs currently in operation. (JD)

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Corporate and Higher Education Collaboration to Improve Teaching: A Case Study

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Providing support for staff development in public schools is considered a worthy mission by many institutions of higher education. Unfortunately, resources are often limited and there is insufficient funding for faculty to achieve this goal. This paper will explore an innovative approach to funding school improvement efforts. It looks at a series of programs initiated by National College of Education in collaboration with several corporations and foundations in the Chicago, Illinois metropolitan area. The evolution of the College's participation in these collaborative endeavors will be reported as well as the strategies used to solicit corporate, institutional, and public school support.

This paper discusses these collaborative endeavors from two perspectives. First, it focuses on the institution of higher education noting particularly why the involvement of key academic administrators, faculty, and development office personnel is crucial to the success of these projects. Institutions of higher education must consider a number of factors when becoming involved in joint sponsorship of school improvement projects. These considerations center on the mission of the college, personnel and faculty qualifications, and the implicit and explicit objectives of collaborative proposals. It also discusses some of the problems encountered in implementation.

The second perspective in collaborative endeavors is that of the corporation providing technical assistance and financial support. There are also a number of important considerations that face corporations before becoming involved in collaborative projects with institutions of higher education. Here, examples will be drawn from four different projects. They are: 1) The Adopt-A-School Project, a collaboration between National College and a group of corporations, provides staff development in the areas of math and reading in Chicago's public schools. 2) The Amoco Project, funded by the Amoco Corporation, retrains middle school teachers in the areas of math and science education. 3) The Chicago Area Preengineering Program, a consortium of corporations working with National College and the Museum of Science and Industry, provides training to improve teachers' skills in the areas of math and science. And 4) The Borg-Warner Project provides support for teachers in the areas of reading and microcomputers. All of these projects have involved corporate personnel in the implementation process.

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CORPORATE AND HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE TEACHING: A CASE STUDY

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Paper presented at the thirty-second ICET World Assembly, Vancouver, British Columbia, July 23, 1985.

At a June commencement in 1981 on a beautiful day in Ravinia Park on the North Shore of Chicago, Ruth Love challenged National College of Education to become more directly involved in the public schools in the city of Chicago. She challenged a college whose nearly 100-year history has been committed to the training of teachers. Her challenge was not taken lightly. It hit a responsive chord among the faculty members, administrators, and graduates in the audience. On that quiet morning, miles from the heart of inner city, one could feel a certain sense of guilt sweep over the audience. While many were conscious of the efforts that National College had made to begin school improvement programs in the city, they also knew there was always more to be done. The situation in the Chicago school system, one of the nation's largest, had reached crisis proportions. But dealing with the large bureaucracy frequently brought about problems that seriously hampered school improvement efforts.

The long range plan of the College, which had been completed one year earlier, called for the establishment of model schools within the City. These model programs were to serve as places for college students, faculty, and public school teachers to work together in improving the quality of education being offered the children. But making that link between a long range goal and immediate reality was another thing. The question on everyone's mind was, "How do we get from here to there?"

This paper provides a case study of how a college, a large urban school system, and the corporate community worked together to improve the Chicago Public Schools. It will first provide a descriptive overview of the evolution of the effort. It will then offer some suggestions for institutions considering becoming involved in similar types of collaborative endeavors.

The Collaborative Model -- A Case Study

Four months after Dr. Love's challenge, she and President Orley Herron announced that National College of Education would "adopt" Graham and Hendricks Elementary Schools. In the words of President Herron, "We see this as a challenge and a great opportunity to be of assistance to the Chicago Public Schools." On that day, National College of Education became the first institution of higher education to become part of Dr. Love's Adopt-A-School Program in Chicago. She said, "We are delighted that a major education college will be working closely with administrators of the two schools, their faculties, parents, and community groups in an effort to foster quality education." Dr. Love reinforced the need to develop projects that were grounded in a broad-based community commitment.

The adoption of these particular two schools was a sensitive issue, however. Newspaper headlines the following day in the Chicago Tribune declared, "National College Adopts Two Boycotted Schools." The Sun-Times accented the negative when it referred to these elementary schools as "Troubled Schools." Graham and Hendricks Schools had recently been boycotted by students protesting the reassignment of some children to the other school. Hendricks School (an all black school) and Graham (a predominately white school) had been the targets of pupil boycotts because parents did not want boundary changes that would result in integrating blacks and whites at the two schools. Was National College walking into a hornet's nest? What appeared as a college choosing to work in two public schools was really part of a far more complex situation.

National College's commitment was to accept a challenge to improve the educational program in each of the schools. It did not get involved to try to solve a desegregation problem. The primary goal of this adopt-a-school

effort was to improve the educational quality by focusing on the basic skills of the students. No "quick fixes" were promised. Progress was to be achieved through steady application of proven teaching strategies, not through random, short-lived experimentation. Graham and Hendricks were both kindergarten through eighth grade schools. They were located only ten blocks apart from one another and served adjacent communities. Now both schools were undergoing significant changes in their enrollment makeup as a result of Chicago's desegregation plan. This plan redrew school boundaries and transferred approximately 130 children from Graham to Hendricks and 130 children from Hendricks to Graham. The predominately white school was almost twice the size of the smaller black school. But small or large, black or white, both schools in recent years had failed to live up to the educational goals set out for them. Achievement scores in both schools were well below the national average, and for that matter, below the Chicago average. Thus, while the sensitive desegregation issue was a concern shared by parents of both schools, they were more concerned that their children were being short changed by an inferior brand of public education. Parents from both schools had their children boycott the schools rather than transfer. They felt that children transferring from Graham to Hendricks or visa versa had nothing to gain but a bus ride. They wanted assurances that their children would gain a better education if they were to transfer schools. "Educate and we'll integrate" became the posture of the parents who led the boycott of the two schools.

The School of Education had an opportunity to work in two troubled schools that were very receptive to its involvement, but beneath it all parents, administrators, and particularly teachers, were very skeptical about the nature of National College's involvement. Did National College have a hidden agenda? Was this venture just another research study that would be funded or supported by the public schools?

Adopt-A-School -- The Role of National College

National College was not going to apply a band-aid to the assorted aches and pains of these two schools. It had no intention to send out a troup of student teachers and hope that the additional manpower would suffice. Instead, the Dean of the School of Education met with parents, administrators, and teachers of each of the schools. He made clear to all of the groups involved that National College would first conduct a needs assessment to determine those academic areas that parents, teachers, and administrators felt should be targeted for improvement efforts. He reinforced the position that National's commitment was to improve the educational program, not solve the desegregation problem. The results of the needs assessment indicated that, while there were many areas that needed support and help, mathematics and reading were the two major concerns of parents, teachers, and administrators.

It was felt that demonstrable gains in student achievement were very important to the success of the Adopt-A-School Program. Such results could foster good feelings about the schools and increase the community's commitment to improvement efforts. For this reason it was decided the first year to target support predominantly in the area of math education.

Math was a basic skill area that Graham and Hendricks students were doing poorly in and also one that could show success faster than in other areas. Because it had fewer variables affecting the achievement of children. Teachers could move more quickly in identifying pupil's problems and help them master new skills in a shorter period of time. It was recommended that positive attitudes in mathematics would spill over into other areas of study.

In January of 1982 the College made the commitment to asign its most senior mathematics professor, Dr. Paul Trafton, to begin the inservice work in the two buildings. He worked with teachers to identify the major problems that their students faced in math and began assessing these problems by using Title I materials that he had developed.

The needs assessment in each of the schools indicated that there were limited materials available for the children and the teachers to use, particularly in the area of mathematics education. The proposed math improvement program required the reproduction of a vast amount of materials. These came from a Title I exemplary project that Dr. Trafton had developed earlier in Albany, Georgia. The materials had proven to be successful and were very appropriate for this setting. It was estimated that the first round of consumable materials would cost about $22,000. In addition, there was added expense of Dr. Trafton's time. The College was releasing him from a course for which it had to cover with other personnel.

Financing the Project -- Soliciting Corporate Support

The first problem that National had to face was that of financing its work in these two schools. The College received a tremendous amount of press coverage for making an effort to improve the situation in these two schools. But the cold financial reality of how to make it all happen was another matter. The administration of the School of Education did not know where to turn for the resources to support such a program. If this project was to be a success the Dean needed to find someone to assist him in securing the funding needed for it to be a success. He felt that it was important that he begin to become more closely involved with the College's Office of Development, not only to solve this particular financial dilemma, but to insure that the School of Education would receive support in the future to implement other similar programs.

Two approaches were taken to solicit the support of corporations in funding this program. One was to ask for in-kind contributions, the other was to seek direct monetary assistance. It was decided that the request for direct money would be appropriate even though Dr. Love had announced earlier that the Adopt-A-School Program would not ask for monetary support but rely solely on in-kind contributions and people power. She made an exception in this instance and allowed the College to solicit funding. This was necessary because there were some corporations and foundations that felt they did not have the expertise to provide in-kind contributions. They preferred instead to give monetary assistance to the program. They felt strongly, however, that they did not want their $10,000-$20,000 just thrown into the operating budget of the Chicago Public Schools. They wanted assurances that the College would do something of merit.

Certainly the College had an edge in raising the money to support this project due to the sense of urgency that all the press coverage created when the two schools were boycotted. A social problem existed, and many foundations and corporations wanted to help in providing support for the solution of that problem. Over the years the development office had also worked with several of the foundations that were identified as potential funders. This project provided a unique opportunity to capitalize on these contacts.

Some large corporations could not respond quickly enough to National's request for support. Smaller foundations and corporations that knew of National College's commitment to Chicago also came to the rescue. Many corporate foundations felt that the most appropriate way for them to assist in this project was to provide direct support by way of supplying copying machines, paper, and other learning materials that were needed. National

College became a broker for a variety of services that different corporate groups could provide. In this way, the College's role was unique. The corporations were not working directly with the public schools to improve the basic skills of children, but rather through National College. The strategy worked well. National College was able to raise approximately $110,000 plus many additional in-kind contributions during the first year of the program.

The College made a commitment to launch a reading program a Graham and Hendricks Schools during the second year. The success of this initial venture at these two schools spawned additional school improvement efforts. During the second year the project expanded to seven schools. The word quickly got out to other district superintendents and principals. National College received numerous calls requesting service in their buildings since they also had many problems. Suddenly the opportunities to work in the schools seemed unlimited. Many of these schools served the Black and Hispanic communities. With all this interest, National quickly realized that there was no way it could ever fund all of these possibilities and still maintain the academic quality needed to sustain the reputation of the program. Some of the corporations and foundations that were funding the program also began to ask, "If this program is that wonderful, why shouldn't the Chicago Public Schools begin to adopt it and support it as one of its main thrusts?" At that point, the College began to consider other possibilities where the program might become more visible on a broader scale throughout the school system. The following year it grew to twenty-one schools. Today, it continues to operate in the entire district with twenty-four buildings involved.

National Expands the Collaborative Effort

The success of the Adopt-A-School collaboration effort lead National College to explore the possibility of further collaborations with schools and corporations. During the first year of the project the College was approached by the Chicago Area Precollege Engineering Program (CAPCEP) to begin to develop a model for working with middle school teachers. The goal of CAPCEP was to increase minority participation in math and science based careers. Attention was focused on increasing the knowledge base and teaching effectiveness of teachers in 15 targeted schools. The CAPCEP board was composed of representatives from corporations, engineering colleges and the Chicago Public Schools. National College of Education was asked to develop a training program that would update the skills of math and science teachers in Chicago middle schools. The Chicago school board had already agreed to a 16 day commitment of inservice education during which time the school system would cover the cost of releasing teachers from their classroom responsibilities. But many problems arose during the first year. Teachers had minimal skills or no previous course work in either math or science; others had majored in one of the fields. Availability of substitute teachers led to sporadic attendance. Unrealistic goals and timetables had been set. The result by trial and error was a complete redesign of the program within a year or two. In the end, the project goals and priorities were revised and now the program has become quite successful.

Based on the early success of National College's efforts in the area of mathematics in the Adopt-A-School Program, foundation interest in the college's involvement in math and science education in Chicago grew. One of the key corporate foundations that began to work with National College of Education to initiate a Chicago-based project was the Amoco Foundation.

The College's involvement with Amoco Corporation beginning in 1981 was one that truly characterized a collaborative effort. Amoco Foundation had already provided the support to implement a very successful Principal's Scholar Program with the University of Illinois. This program provided incentives and support to high school students who were entering as freshmen in 19 of Chicago's inner city high schools. All of these students were required to take a heavy academic program during their four years of high school, including a strong concentration in math and science. In order to qualify for the program they had to demonstrate a high level of achievement in the basic skills areas. While the program was very successful, the number of students qualifying for the Principal's Scholar Program had begun to drop. At the same time National College was very interested in continuing to work as it had in the CAPCEP Program in increasing the math and science teaching strategies of classroom teachers at the middle school level. The Amoco Foundation felt that if the teachers had better skills, then the capacity of students to qualify for the Principal's Scholars Program would also improve.

Concurrently the Chicago Public Schools had developed a special certification status for teachers who met a 16-hour requirement in either math or science and successfully completed a competency test in that area. Teachers who had qualified in either math or science could not be arbitrarily transferred from school to school as many teachers are in the City of Chicago. They would instead become one of the math or science specialists for their building.

Through this three-way collaborative effort, the public schools would receive a new cadre of certified teachers in math and science, National College would become involved in training teachers who had a high level of motivation, and Amoco would have helped train a new group of math and

science specialists as well as ensure greater numbers of students who would eventually qualify for the Principal's Scholars Program. Each group had slightly different but complimentary goals in mind for the project.

The Amoco Project provided full tuition for the teachers who enrolled in the 16 semester hour sequence of courses to improve their math or science skills. Forty teachers in math and forty teachers in science were recruited into the program in 1981. Teachers also received a stipend to use either for materials in their classrooms or for books. The scholarship, stipend, and entitlement program of the Chicago Public Schools were considered to be sufficient motivation to recruit large numbers of teachers to apply to the program. An ancillary goal of the program was to have teachers bring ideas and resources back to their schools to share with other teachers. Many of the principals were very appreciative of the way this program helped foster the professional development of staff.

The forty teachers in the Amoco Program made outstanding progress and the program was evaluated as a true success. Even with all the success of the program and the incentives available for teachers, one of the problems that has plagued the program since its inception is the recruitment of a sufficient number of teachers to enter the program. A full-time project coordinator has been hired during the second funding of the project to go into the schools and encourage teachers to enroll in the program. Many of the teachers also had very busy schedules after school and during the summers which limited opportunity for involvement in a program that asked them to take courses in a sequence. All of the above led to some discouragement for the College, Amoco, and the Chicago Public Schools. All parties worked closely to resolve the problems inherent in this kind of program. The second round of funding provides for a director, secretarial support, and supplemental materials that will help insure the development

of a larger cadre of students. The College was impressed with the willingness of the foundation to continuue to pursue the program even though some rocky moments had occurred during implementation. Too often projects are dropped when the first small problem developes. But recognizing that overcoming difficulties are part of the process of improving projects, provides incentive for all parties to work together and remain committed to project goals.

Considerations for Collaboration

Perhaps most important in initiating a collaborative model for school improvement is to ensure that the administration of the college fully supports collaboration with business and industry. The college must feel that is is part of the mission of the institution before proceeding. Too frequently grants are pursued only for the sake of receiving another grant and the central mission of the institution is not enhanced by the implementation of a project. When this occurs, administrative support wanes quickly and time and effort is wasted on a project that really is not valued by the college.

In the end, each party involved needs to conduct a sort of cost-benefit analysis. In other words, "What is in it for me?" What does the foundation want to accomplish and what does the college seek to accomplish? For example, many grants can be characterized as money-in, money-out propositions. Money is received and then spent for direct services or materials that are used for the project. There is no monetary return to the institution. At the same time the visibility of the institution's involvement can enhance the reputation of the college. Likewise, foundations also want visibility and to demonstrate that their funds are being used effectively. As one foundation put it, "Unless we

influence the future decisions of the Chicago Board of Education we really have not accomplished much."

Beyond clarifying motivations for involvement, it is important to ensure that there is faculty support for the project. This basic principle is fundamental to the success of any collaborative endeavor. It is very important that the faculty of the college become committed to the project from its inception. Faculty members who are going to be directly involved in implementing school improvement efforts need to have a sense of ownership. While it is difficult to anticipate their needs, clarifying expectations at an early date is crucial. When faculty get involved reluctantly it is hard to resurrect commitment later on. Obviously, it is important to be very precise about the extent of involvement that the institution is making before a project is actually initiated.

Corporate officers often want to be involved at the conceptualization stage. It is important to be cognizant of the foundation's investment of time so that it be used constructively. A strong commitment by the college will help them develop confidence in the project. And even if the project is not funded, there will be a positive track record established between the college and the foundation.

Limitations of College Resources

Schools of education must be very cautious not to overcommit limited institutional resources. It is quite easy to get into the position where a few talented faculty members get committed to work on too many projects. Suddenly, they no longer can deliver on all that has been promised. At some point it may be important to reassess the merit of each project and cautiously choose how key professors will be used. In some cases, it may

be more appropriate (and cost-effective) to have additional staff members work with a senior faculty member so that the impact of the key faculty members is broadened by the support people who assist in the actual implementation. This expands the impact of the faculty "superstars."

In many situations it may be necessary for an institution to hire people prior to the implementation of the project. The difficulty with this, of course, is that the institution can be put in a position of contracting individuals who may not get fully funded. Careful scheduling of faculty teaching loads can often minimize potential problems in this area and provide the needed release time for faculty members to work in off-campus programs. But taking faculty members from the on-campus programs to become involved in field projects may create a different kind of problem. It is easy to deteriorate the quality of on-campus programs when numerous faculty members become involved off-campus.

Well intentioned staff in the college development office can also create problems between the administration of an institution and the academic faculty. The development office can become involved with a corporation that has a interest in some area and quickly overcommit the institution. Academic administrators and faculty members are then left with the responsibility of coming through for the development office to save the situation. Another problem arises when faculty members do not have enough time to put together a project as rapidly as the development office may have promised it. Time to develop a grant is usually not built into a faculty member's work load. It may be necessary to develop systems to support release time for faculty to develop proposals. One of the most productive ventures that National College received funding for was a two-year grant from the Joyce Foundation to provide release time for faculty to write grants to assist the Chicago Public Schools.

Budgeting

Another concern for colleges is to ensure that they have developed a budget that will meet the program needs and support the project in a way that will allow it to be delivered. Many times foundations are placed in the awkward position of responding to grants writers that they have not asked for enough money; that the proposed project will never be completed given the limited funds that have been requested. This clearly indicates a lack of experience and understanding on the part of the proposal writers of what is needed to do a project well. In many cases also, unforeseen problems arise as the project is being implemented. It is important in these instances to be straight with the funding agents and indicate why the project cannot be implemented as originally planned. In most cases corporations are quite willing to make the appropriate adjustments necessary in order for the project to be completed.

Conclusion

The most common approach to school improvement has been the involvement of instituions of higher education in campus based in-service programs or the use of consultants to come in and conduct one-day in-service workshops. There is ample research, however, that shows that each of these approaches has inherent problems. There is no "quick fix" when it comes to school improvement. The most frequently mentioned drawback of these traditional approaches is that of providing support in the classroom following in-service training. A common characteristic of the projects described in this paper has been the emphasis placed on the application of ideas and consistent, thoughtful follow through.

The time and support needed to provide this kind of careful application of theory to practice would not have been available without help from several corporations and the commitment of the Chicago Public Schools. The Collge, the funding corporations, and the school system all had a common goal in mind -- Improving the education of young children.